

creating a feeling of balance. I, for one, will gladly receive the support—but not the leadership—of men who have a feeling for what has to be done “according to necessity.”

## Elemental Poem

EAST WEST NORTH SOUTH  
EARTH AIR FIRE WATER

We turn to the East: AIR  
Blue space—breathing—the kiss of life  
The wind driving sails and waves across the ocean  
Impelling clouds across the sky.  
Blowing away the cobwebs at Cape Spear  
We take deep breaths and laugh.  
Meditation on the breath  
I watch your breathing as you sleep.

*Otherwise:*

Difficulty in breathing, the poisoned air  
Tear gas, poison gas in the trenches  
Coughing up one's guts  
Emphysema, asthma, bronchitis  
Choking, throttled, the breath stopped  
The air that kills.

We turn to the South: FIRE  
The singing kettle on the hearth  
Cooking: the bubbling pot of beans  
The barbecue that friends and neighbours share  
The camp fire, sitting in a circle  
Glowing coals, warmth in winter  
Making love by firelight  
Candles burning before the shrines  
Solar energy  
The fiery sunset flowing red  
The stars dancing round the sky.

## NOTES

1. Adapted from a speech intended to stimulate thinking and discussion, written for the conference on Women's Alternatives for Negotiating Peace, held June 5-9, 1985, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

*Otherwise:*

Smoke from the death camps: Auschwitz  
The burning of people  
Witches burned alive in the burning-times  
The mushroom cloud at Hiroshima  
Bombed houses catching fire in Philadelphia  
Napalm burns on screaming children  
Caught in cross-fire  
Fire that destroys.

We turn to the West: WATER  
First element, the waters of life  
The sea womb of the Mother Goddess, giving birth  
To strange creatures, bearing exotic cargoes  
Aphrodite rises from the foam  
The waterfall tumbling over cliff  
The holy well, the sacred spring  
That heal our spirits  
Swimming in the sunset  
Immanence is light on water.

*Otherwise:*

The flood that destroys, the burst dam  
The raging sea, sailors drowning  
The Ocean Ranger gone, bodies never found  
The water cannon on the protest march  
Polluted lakes killing fish; mercury poison  
The poisoned water that kills.

We turn to the North: EARTH  
Gaea, Mother Earth, the Deep-Breasted One  
The nurse of seedlings, infusing the blossoms

Forming the fruit  
 Digging our gardens  
 Manuring, tilling, sowing seeds  
 Until the bean hangs on the vine  
 Until the lettuces fan out their delicate leaves  
 Carrots, potatoes plump and swell  
 The fertile earth, abundantly feeding her children  
 At the last our final resting-place.

*Otherwise:*

The parched earth, desert, famine  
 The rain forests cut down  
 Defoliation—stripping the earth  
 Chemical warfare where nothing grows

The earth poisoned with PCBs  
 Eroded soil, the waste land  
 The bomb—nuclear winter  
 The poisoned earth.

**EARTH AIR FIRE WATER**

Essential elements, natural sources, re-sources:  
 Extract, extort, exploit, rape, destroy, kill  
 Or reverence, worship, conserve the sacred grounds of being?

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[This poem was written and performed as a ritual for a  
 Women's Peace Celebration, L.S.P.U. Hall, St. John's, 20  
 May 1985.]